

Web Blog: Tara Weatherholt

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Today, the microbiology team took several teachers, including myself, to multiple sites in the Mojave to take soil samples to be used for further analysis. I was extremely excited to partake in this activity in that it gave me the opportunity to see how NASA scientists do sterile sampling. The sample sites contained different precipitation levels, which would eventually allow the team to analyze them in terms of microbial content variations. At each sample site we made a 10 m X 10 m transect to use in our collections. The samples were labelled with a location, date, and site number. I also had the opportunity to use a GPS device.

Overall, this experience gave me many ideas to implement in the classroom. Soil transects can be easily done with students for numerous lab activities. They are also fun and economical cost-wise. Transect labs also allow students to get experience in field work, and I feel confident that I can explain soil sampling methods to them after doing this activity. I feel extremely enthusiastic about this activity and its effectiveness in the classroom as a formative assessment of laboratory skills and practices. I definitely plan to use soil transects in my instruction and have the students utilize various soil kits to supplement this activity.